



## **Montana Public Service Commission**

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September 22, 2008—*For Immediate Release*

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### **PSC Considering NorthWestern's Compliance with Bankruptcy Requirements**

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is holding a hearing this week regarding NorthWestern Corporation and its 2004 Bankruptcy Stipulation and related requirements in PSC Order No. 6505e. The September 24 hearing begins at 9:00 am in the PSC offices and may extend another day, depending on how long it takes to cover all of the issues in the contested case.

A significant component of the bankruptcy agreement relies on the "ring-fencing" concept. The idea is to separate and insulate public utility assets, facilities, and operations from risks associated with non-utility ventures of the Corporation. For example, parent company public utility debt cannot be used for non-utility investment purposes. The Montana Consumer Counsel contends that NorthWestern violated this aspect of the agreement when it acquired interests in Colstrip Unit 4, a coal-fired generation plant east of Billings. Northwestern Corporation rejects the Consumer Counsel's case, stating it has followed all of the requirements fully.

The hearing, during which both sides will be presenting their arguments to the PSC, can be viewed live via the Internet on the PSC's website at <http://psc.mt.gov/eDocs/#Calendars> and will also be archived for viewing later on the same site. The Commission's office is located at 1701 Prospect Avenue in Helena.

Made up of 5 elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.

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